# Big Flat Habitat Management Unit

Habitat Improvement Plantings Lower Snake River, Washington 1995

### Background

- Big Flat Habitat Management Unit was set aside for intensive terrestrial wildlife habitat development and management under the Lower Snake River Fish and Wildlife Compensation Plan.
- Big Flat is also the largest irrigated habitat unit encompassing 850 acres, 260 of which are irrigated.

Big Flat HMU



## Purpose of Plantings

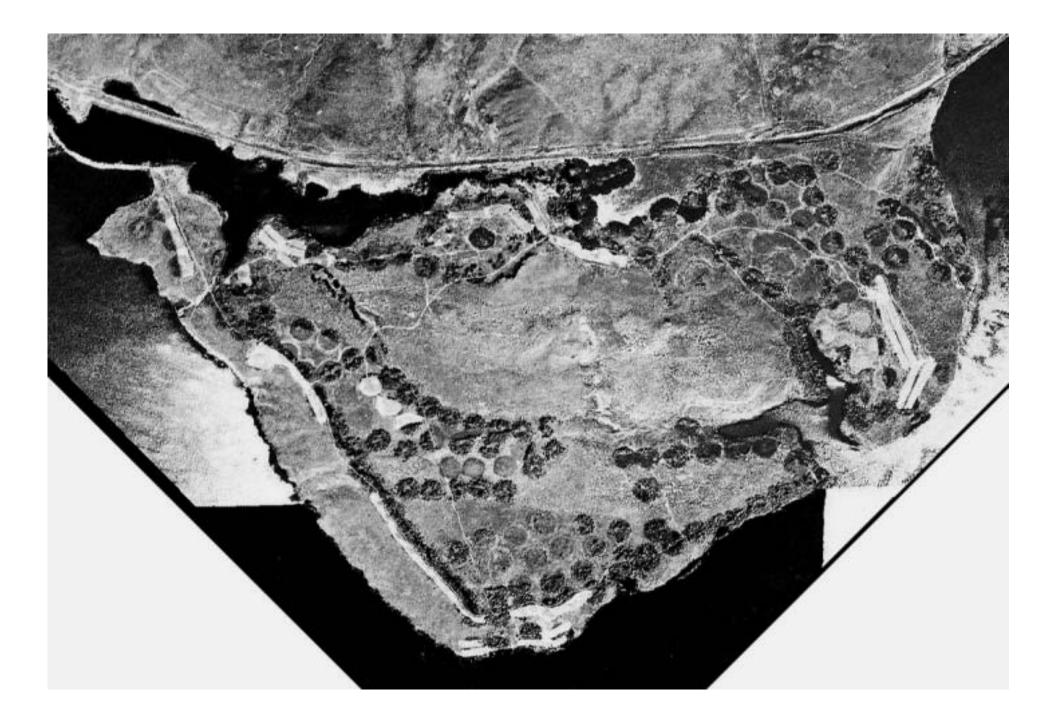
- To improve riparian forest component of mitigation plantings-both quantity and quality
- Improve cavity nesting habitat
- Improve migratory song bird habitat

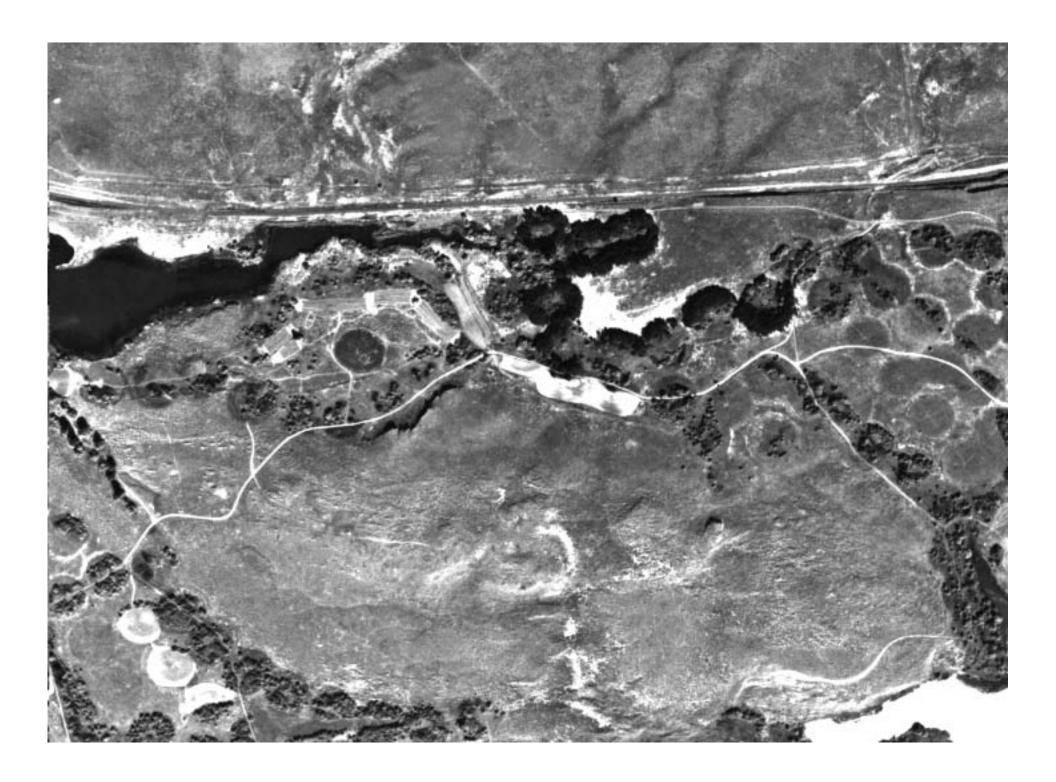
#### What Was Done

- Plant approximately 5300 native or near native shrubs and trees over 15 acres in four locations
- Use geotextile fabric mulch
- Planting scheme was designed to give a more natural character to the plantings while adding diversity

#### Assessment of Risk

- Irrigation coverage adequate with existing system?
- How will fabric mulch perform?
- Wildlife damage?





# Contract Responsibility + Cost

- Prepare planting site by plowing and disking strips at delineated locations
- Lay fabric mulch (7 rows per strip-1strip on either side of the big gun risers)
- Obtain and plant trees and shrubs according to design
- Meet 70% survival through the first growing season
- 8(a) Contract \$50,150

## Changes to Contract

- Contract started 2 months late
- Some tree and shrub species were substituted due to availability of those specified

### Maintenance

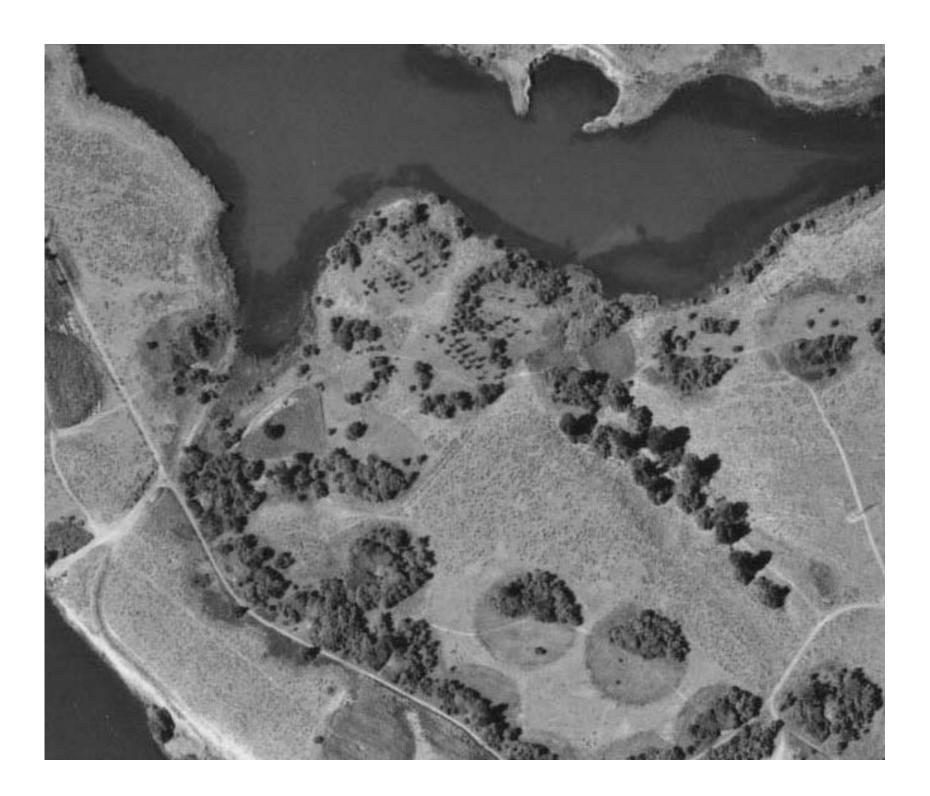
- Maintain existing irrigation coverage.
  Added some temporary irrigation in two areas
- Clear herbaceous vegetation from around living trees and shrubs

### **Initial Survival**

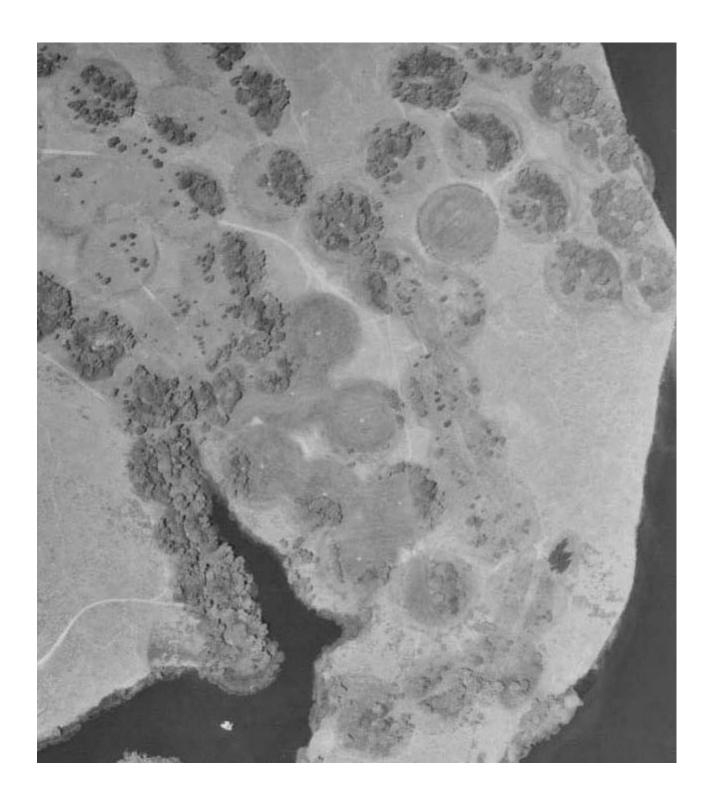
- 80% of the plantings survived the first year
- 67% were living after the second year
- 64% were living after the third year
- Fairly stable since then

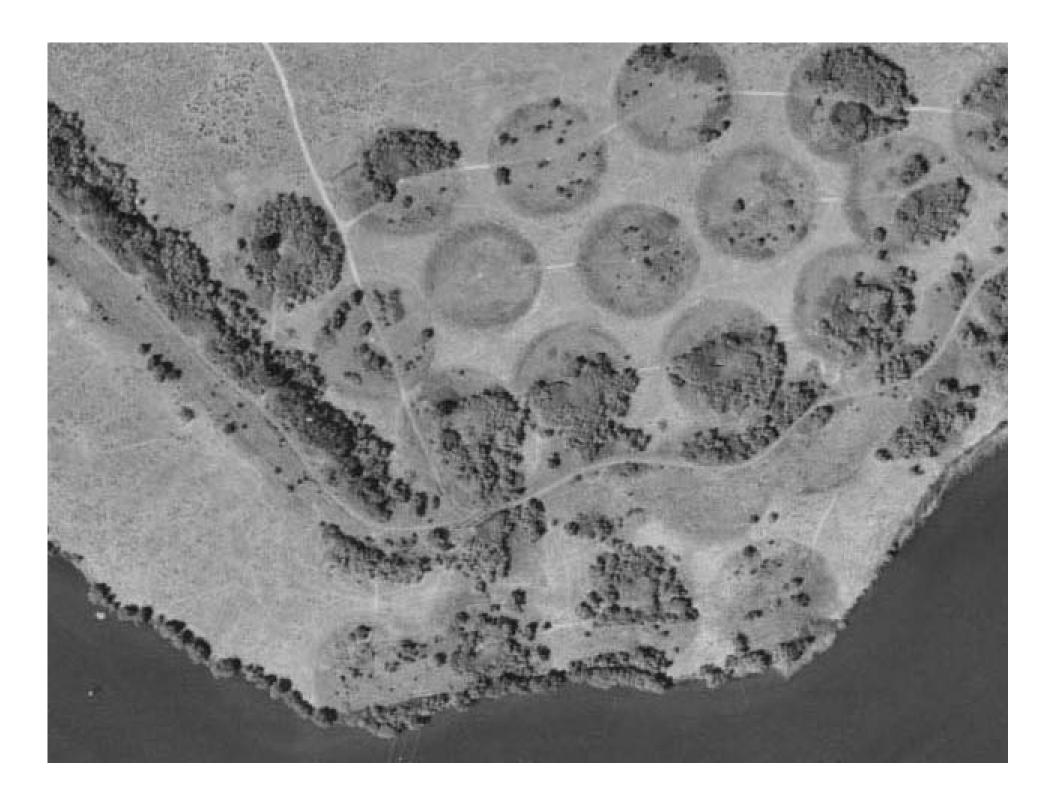
### Reason for Plant Loss

- Competition with herbaceous vegetation
- Inadequate irrigation coverage
- Planting stock was dead or did not survive the first planting season
- Wildlife damage









## Was The Planting a Success?

- Although some areas did not grow as well as others, the original goals of the planting were met
- Wildlife (both birds and big game) are already utilizing these areas
- In short, yes it was successful, though replanting would help a few areas

### Lessons Learned

- Be flexible. Expect changes to occur.
- Set realistic goals. Keep simple; Expect some failure.
- Don't stop after construction is done.
  Maintenance will improve your chances for success.
- Learn from what worked and what didn't.

### Costs-Proposed vs. Actual

- Original cost estimate was \$55,000 for 25 acres on two HMUs. Contract was pared down to one site (~\$50,000) due to contract going 8(a)
- The second area was completed the next year at a cost of about \$26,000 (IFB)